

REPORTS ON WORK AT MONAGRI, LAGOUDERA, AND HAGIOS NEOPHYTOS, CYPRUS, 1969/1970

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MONAGRI.

THE village of Monagri lies in the southern foothills of the Troodos range, at about five hundred meters above sea level and twenty-eight kilometers from Limassol. It is just off the Limassol-Troodos road in the fertile valley of the River Kouris, one of only two rivers in Cyprus which flow throughout the year and do not dry up.

In 1969, with the kind permission of His Grace the Bishop of Kition and the cooperation of the Department of Antiquities of the Republic of Cyprus, Dumbarton Oaks was granted a permit for the cleaning, preservation, and survey of the paintings in the monastery church of the Panagia Amasgou near Monagri. We are grateful to the Director of Antiquities, Dr. V. Karageorghis, and to the Curator of Monuments, Mr. A. Papageorgiou, for their good offices in the course of operations and in particular for the opening of a dirt road as far as the river crossing, which has allowed us relatively easy access to the church.

The work was carried out under the supervision of the writer, with the skilled assistance of Mr. Yiannis Makrides, of the Dumbarton Oaks field staff, and of local employees. Mr. Richard Anderson of the University of Illinois and Dumbarton Oaks joined in the work at the Panagia Amasgou at the end of 1969 and in 1970. His activities included some investigation of the fabric of the building, the drawing of a plan and elevation of it, the fixing of plaster and paint layers, photographic work here as well as at Lagoudera and at Asinou, and even the construction of a footbridge to permit the crossing of the River Kouris during the winter and springtime, enabling us thereby to carry on our work at the Panagia Amasgou without interruption.

Hagios Georgios

Before beginning work at the Panagia Amasgou, Dumbarton Oaks was happy to be

of assistance to the Department of Antiquities with some urgently needed first-aid work on the paintings in the vault of the village church of Hagios Georgios, Monagri. The work was confined to the western end of the vault where paintings in imminent danger of falling were made secure. No other cleaning or conservation work was attempted since a full-scale operation in this church might take two to three years. The paintings probably date from the fifteenth century and the standard of execution is not high, as may be seen from the illustrations (figs. 1–3).

*The Panagia Amasgou*¹

Work began here in September 1969 and continued into 1971. It has not, however, been carried on without interruption, since it overlapped with the termination of the Dumbarton Oaks projects at Hagios Chrysostomos and at Lythrangomi, which caused Mr. Makrides to be absent from Monagri for several months, thus bringing the work there to a halt.

The church (fig. 4) is of the single-nave type with blind arches in the north and south walls and a semicircular apse. The walls and barrel vault are of simple stonework. There is evidence of more than one period of repair and structural change, but this is difficult to interpret since the fabric of the building recently underwent thorough repair and consolidation.

The history of the church is unknown, except that the surrounding buildings indicate that it was a monastery church, and that the latest period of painting is dated to 1564.

The paintings are of three or more periods. The first is, at present, represented by only

¹ R. Gunnis, *Historic Cyprus* (London, 1936), 346–47, where the church is said to be dedicated to the Madonna of Damascus (Gunnis mentions only the icons), and D. Talbot Rice, *The Icons of Cyprus* (London, 1937) (who also mentions the icons), 65 f., 74, 79, 122, 134, 148 f., 169, 215, 245, 257, 269.

a small fragment behind some masonry, of which all that can be said is that it apparently belongs to a time before the church took on its present shape.

In a second period it seems likely that the whole church was decorated with paintings. The remains are fragmentary, but enough survives to show that the iconographic program consisted of the festival scenes in the vaults, a Koimesis on the west wall, and elsewhere single figures of saints. The festival sequence began with the Annunciation on the north wall between the spandrels of the central blind arches, continued on the south side of the vault with scenes of the Nativity (fig. 8), the Presentation (fig. 5), and the Baptism running from east to west, and then crossed to the north side of the vault where there were scenes of the Entry into Jerusalem, the Crucifixion, and the Anastasis. The cycle was completed by the Ascension and Pentecost (fig. 6) which are, respectively, on the north and south sides of the sanctuary vault. In the spandrel between the northwest blind arch and the west wall is the seated figure of the Evangelist Mark against an architectural background; a fragment of architecture in the equivalent position on the south wall suggests that there were figures of the four evangelists in the spandrels. A parallel for the placing of the evangelists in the spandrels of the blind arches of a barrel-vaulted church exists at Asinou. The Koimesis (text fig. A, and fig. 7) is of particular iconographic interest in that all the apostles are placed at the feet of the Mother of God, and there seems to be an Archangel at the head of the bier.² Except for a few figures of standing saints, the rest of this second period of painting has disappeared.

A full discussion of the iconography and style of the paintings will be included in the

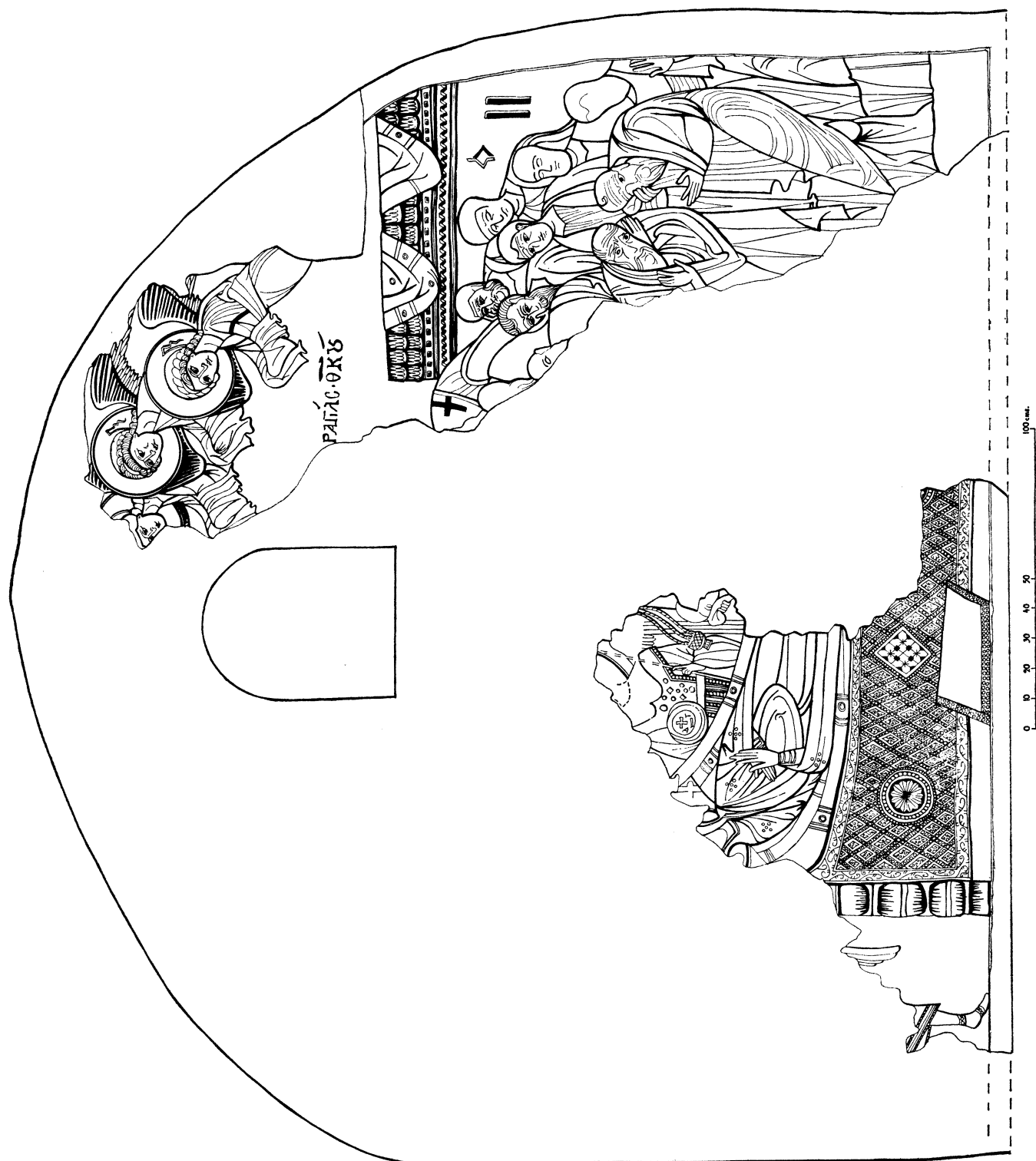
² The nearest parallel to the iconography of the Monagri Koimesis seems to be an icon on an iconostasis beam from Mount Sinai; see K. Weitzmann, "Icon Painting in the Crusader Kingdom," *Dumbarton Oaks Papers*, 20 (1966), 64, fig. 24. The archangel with an orb is in an identical position at the side of Christ, but the other Monagri archangel stands at the head of the bier, whereas on the Sinai icon they are at the foot of it. If Weitzmann's arguments for a Venetian painter are accepted, then the painter for period two at Monagri must also be supposed to be a Venetian.

final report, but meanwhile we should like to suggest that the paintings of the second period date from the thirteenth century.

A third period of painting seems to be confined to the lower registers of the walls at the west end of the church, and therefore it may be regarded as a partial redecoration. All of it is badly damaged, but a representation of St. Zosimos feeding St. Mary of Egypt can be distinguished in the blind arch over the north door, as well as several figures of standing saints. It may have been at this stage that the door and archway on the south side of the sanctuary were blocked up. A fragment of a basket painted on the plaster of the original archway suggests that it, too, was decorated with a picture of St. Zosimos, with a representation of Mary in an equivalent position in the arch on the north side, as is the case at Asinou. If this conjecture as to the subject matter is correct, it would have been unlikely that the representations of Zosimos and Mary were open to view at the time the painter of the third period was working, for he would hardly have painted a second Zosimos and Mary in the northwest blind arch. The style of painting and the lettering of this third period suggest a close link with the painter of the naos at Asinou and may be assigned tentatively to the fourteenth century.

A final period of painting is dated by an inscription on the south wall below the scene of the Presentation of the Mother of God. The date is given in letters according to the new style, as αφεξδ or 1564. At this time the central and western blind arches of the naos were partly repainted, together with the whole of the apse and semidome. In the sanctuary the blocked doorway and arch on the south side were plastered over and painted with full-length figures of two bishops (fig. 6). The two reinforcing ribs in the barrel vault may also date from the same period, but they appear to have been left unpainted. The subject matter of this last period includes the Presentation of the Mother of God on the south wall in the lunette of the central blind arch, and the traditional apse decoration of a standing Mother of God Orans flanked by two Archangels (fig. 9), a Communion of the Apostles, and a procession of the Fathers of the Church.

The plaster ground for all three of the main periods of decoration is in a highly



A. Monagri, Panagia Amasgou, West Wall. The Koimesis. Scale Drawing

dangerous condition and the paint layers of periods three and four are very insecure, being either brittle and flaky, or in a powdery state. Repair work is therefore essential before any cleaning and improvement of the surface appearance of the painting can be carried out. The plaster and paint layers are being consolidated by permeating them with weak solutions of polyvinyl acetate emulsion. When this has been completed a mixture of well-slaked lime and polyvinyl acetate emulsion is injected into the hollow areas between the plaster ground and the masonry support, and the plaster ground is then pressed and fixed to the support. The masonry of the walls is itself of very poor quality, and the quantity of fixative that is necessary to fill the hollow areas indicates that we are, partially at least, rebuilding the masonry support. A second stage in the repair work is the removal of plaster-of-paris edgings, which are being replaced by a more appropriate plaster of slaked lime and chaff, with a pumice powder filler. The paintings are then cleaned of an accumulation of grease and soot, and of cement drippings which were allowed to splash all over the paintings during the grouting and replastering of the interior. The final stage of the work is the coloring-in of plaster repair work in order to achieve a reasonable presentation of the paintings and to allow the original work to stand out.

LAGOUDERA

The Church of the Panagia tou Arakos; Second Preliminary Report, 1969/1970

Work on the paintings continued in the central and western areas of the naos, and by the end of 1970 the cleaning and consolidation of the center of the naos was completed, with the exception of the ground registers (figs. 10, 11). At the west end of the naos the Nativity in the south side of the vault, a series of medallions in the center of the vault, and part of the west end of the south wall were cleaned. Consolidation of these areas where necessary was effected by injections of a filler of slaked lime and polyvinyl acetate emulsion.

Holes and edges of paintings, especially those in the dado around the lower part of the wall of the naos, had been filled with a mixture of cement and lime, or with dental plas-

ter, or with plaster of paris. None of these mixtures is particularly suitable for repair work and they have, therefore, been removed from the paintings in the naos. The holes were then refilled and the edges retrimmed with a plaster of well-slaked lime with chaff mixed into it as a binder. The chaff is previously well washed and soaked and graded so that only the finer pieces are used in the filling of smaller holes. Removal of the previous repair work around the dado, which in some cases covered small areas of painting, revealed that there are two layers of painted plaster at this level and that the pattern of the earlier dado was different.

So far cleaning has been carried out with the aid of several different grades of rubber, ranging from the pencil type of typewriter eraser to the softest of India rubbers. It will, however, be necessary to use chemicals in the lower registers, where a thick amalgam of soot from candles or oil lamps and other dirt covers the paintings. In the First Preliminary Report some repainting in the ground register was noted and tentatively identified as the work of the painter of the Mother of God Panachrantos in the tympanum over the exterior of the north door.³ In the course of further cleaning and restoration it has become clear that the earlier repairs and repainting extend much further than the ground register in the central part of the naos. The main areas affected are the pendentives; these contain an Annunciation in the eastern pair, with Gabriel in the northeast and the Mother of God in the southeast pendentive, and two evangelists in each of the western pendentives. In the drum under the dome there are twelve prophets, and in the reveals of the north and south blind arches under the dome there are roundels with the Anargyroi. All of these areas have suffered erosion by water and damp in the distant past, probably before the secondary wooden roof was put over the church. In the case of the prophets the repairer's scaffold evidently did not reach high enough to allow much work, and his efforts were confined to the repainting of the feet of several of the figures. In the pendentives he did a considerable amount of work, all of it of very poor quality (figs. 12, 13.). Typical of his work are the smears of color—they

³ *DOP*, 23–24 (1969/70), 377–80.

hardly deserve to be called repainting—on the shoulder, neck, and forearm of the Evangelist Matthew. An example of his own work appears in figure 13, the head of the Evangelist John the Theologian, where all trace of the original head had disappeared. The inferior standard of this repainting suggests that it might have been done by a pupil of the painter of the Mother of God Panachrantos; alternatively, the lack of precision in his work might be attributable to inadequate scaffolding and a precarious balance as he worked.

The work of this (fourteenth-century?) repairer is readily distinguishable through his use of a particularly warm shade of yellow ochre and a dark shade of red ochre, both of which differ greatly from the pigments used by the original painter. However, the process of removing the repairer's work and revealing the original painting, where it exists, is a slow and sometimes difficult task.

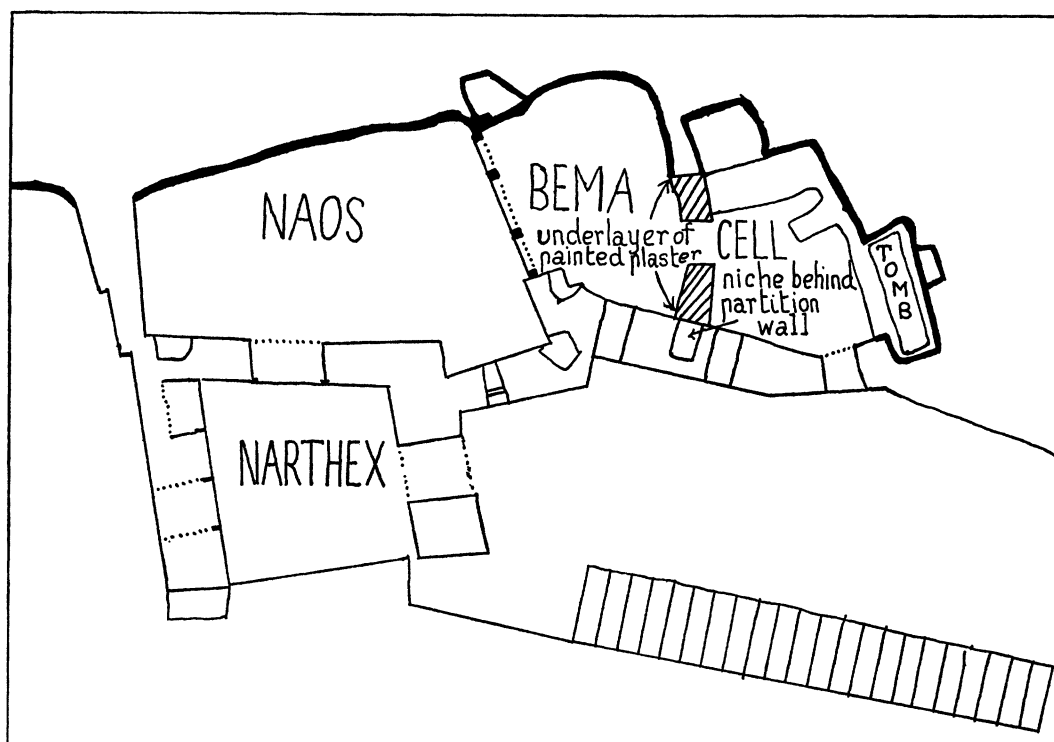
The methods of plastering and painting of the Lagoudera master continue to be of interest as the cleaning operations progress. At the time when the First Preliminary Report was written it was obvious that we were dealing with the work of a man who was a master of his craft; it has now become clear that he was familiar with methods currently supposed to have evolved at a much later date in Italy.⁴ In the two fine compositions of the Presentation of the Mother of God and the Koimesis, in the lunettes of the north and south blind arches under the dome (figs. 14, 16), the major plaster joins run along the red borders delimiting the scenes, as is normal in Byzantine wall painting. However, since these scenes are very large and full of detail, the plaster probably began to dry before the painter came anywhere near the finishing stages of his work. He therefore applied small patches of fresh plaster which he trowelled in more or less smoothly with the general surface of the painting. In figure 16, the joins in the

painting of the Koimesis are indicated. Those for the heads are certain, but the other sectional joins are not as yet entirely clear since the plaster work is very skillfully finished and further hidden by the layers of paint. There is an apparently similar use of fresh plaster patches in the Presentation (fig. 14). Although the pattern of sectional joins is not now clear, the practice of applying some fresh plaster to the surface for the painting of heads seems to have been extensively used. In addition to the examples cited above in the Presentation and Koimesis, fresh plaster was obviously laid on for the heads of the Anagyroi in the roundels in the reveals of the blind arches, and in the pendentives. Thus, there exists at Lagoudera a practical illustration of the instructions given by Cennini in chapter 67 of his *Handbook*,⁵ where he suggests that a patch of plaster sufficient for one head is an appropriate area for a day's work. However, there are differences in the overall method, for Cennini seems to describe a system of surface plaster composed entirely of daily patches, whereas the Lagoudera master was apparently content to use a single layer of plaster as the ground for his painting, and only when it became too dry did he apply fresh thin patches of plaster to complete the work on a scene.

It is too early in the study of methods of wall painting to make a firm statement about the place occupied by the paintings at Lagoudera. Nevertheless, they denote a stage in a development which had its beginnings among Byzantine wall painters, and was finally codified in Cennini's instructions on the subject. The decoration of Byzantine church walls evolved from simple and symbolic statements of faith into more elaborate representations in which the original simplicity was replaced by a wealth of background detail, by an increase in the number of figures, and by greater attention to their execution. The painting of complex scenes required, of course, more time, and it is this time factor which must have necessitated the addition of fresh patches for the uncompleted parts of a large painting such as the Koimesis at Lagoudera. Close

⁴ R. Oertel, "Wandmalerei und Zeichnung in Italien," *Mitteilungen des Kunsthistorischen Instituts in Florenz*, 5 (1940), 280ff. and fig. 16; *idem*, *Die Frühzeit der Italienischen Malerei* (Stuttgart, 1966), 74–78. L. Tintori and M. Meiss, *The Painting of the Life of St. Francis in Assisi* (New York, 1962), 7–8. For a general discussion by the present writer of the development of Byzantine wall painting methods, see *DOP*, 22 (1968), 61–139.

⁵ C. Cennini, *Il libro dell'arte*, ed. and trans. Daniel V. Thompson, Jr., *The Craftsman's Handbook*, 2 vols. (New Haven, 1932–33), I (text), chap. 67, pp. 40–42; II (trans.), pp. 42–45.



B. Paphos, Hagios Neophytos. Plan Showing Position of Earlier Layers of Painting
(adapted by kind permission of C. Mango)

observation of the complex scene of the Feeding of the Five Thousand at Haghia Sophia, Trebizond,⁶ suggests that the same procedure was followed there. These examples provide evidence for a development of methods throughout a period of over a hundred years, which, historically, is more reasonable than the theory of a sudden break and revolution in technique.

HAGIOS NEOPHYTOS, PAPHOS⁷

During the winter months of January to March Mr. Zaferiades and Mr. Haralambides moved to Paphos to continue conservation work on the paintings in the cave of Hagios Neophytos. Our thanks are due to the Abbot and monks of the monastery for their kind hospitality at this time.

The project consisted of securing loose

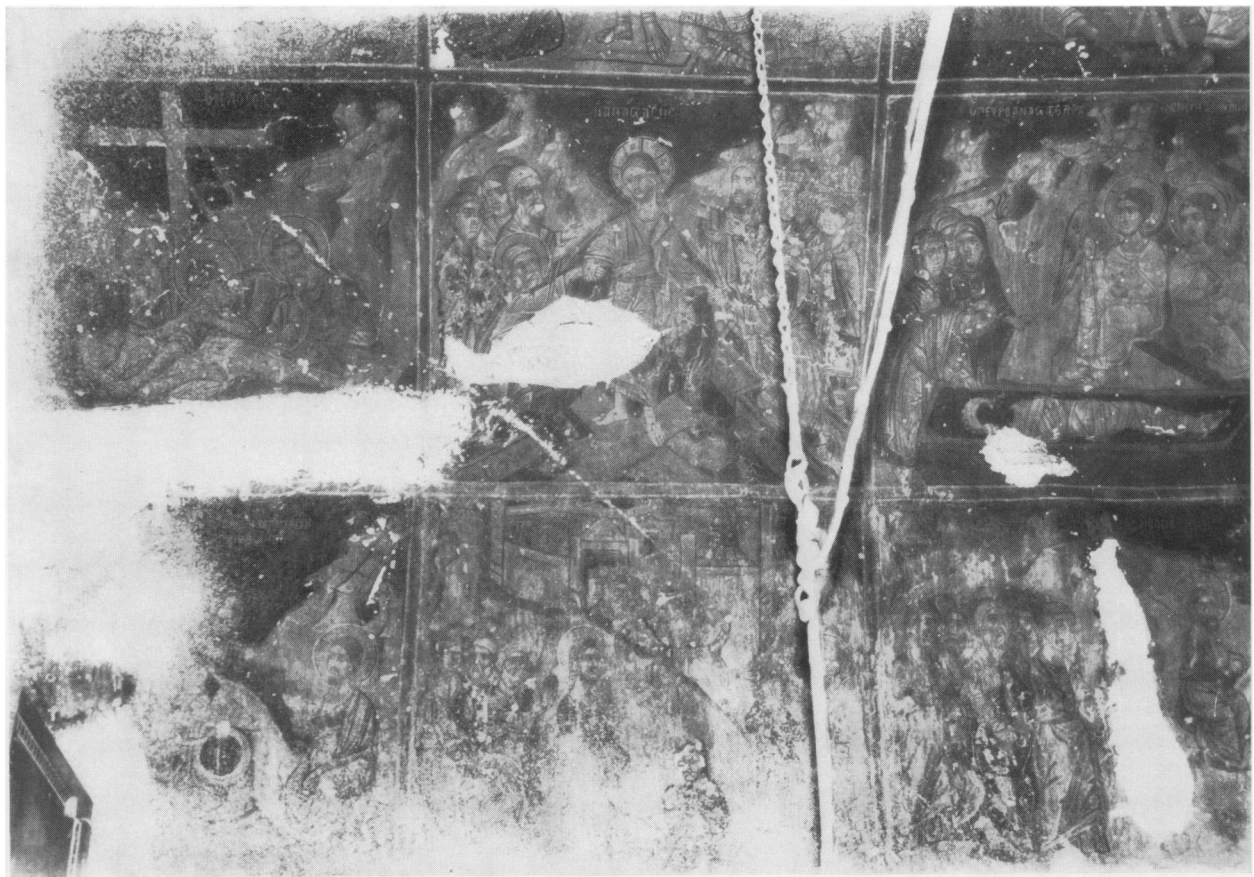
⁶ D. Talbot Rice, ed., *Haghia Sophia, Trebizond* (Edinburgh, 1968), 187, pls. 52, 53, 54. The general view of the scene (pl. 52A) shows the various groups clearly separated against the rock background and it is likely that each group is on a separate patch of plaster.

⁷ C. Mango and E. J. W. Hawkins, "The Hermitage of St. Neophytos and Its Wall Paintings," *DOP*, 20 (1966), 119-206.

plaster and paintings to the rock walls of the caves (figs. 17,18), in the course of which one, and possibly two, earlier layers of painting were discovered. It is now clear that the partition wall between the cell and the bema was added to divide the space originally carved out by St. Neophytos for himself. This is confirmed by the presence of a blocked niche at the junction of the partition wall with the outer rock face of the cave (text fig. B, adapted by kind permission of Professor C. Mango) and by fragments of a painted plaster dado under the blocked niche (fig. 19). Yet another period is represented by an earlier layer of painting on the south side of the partition wall (fig. 20). Further work may clarify these problems.

The close stylistic relation of some of the paintings in the bema and cell of St. Neophytos to those at Lagoudera was noticed by Professor Mango and Mr. Hawkins.⁸ To this stylistic relationship may be added a technical affinity, for there is evidence that one of the painters of the Enkleistra worked his plaster and handled his colors in a manner similar to that used by the Lagoudera master (figs. 21-24).

⁸ *Ibid.*, 206.



1. Wall Paintings, General View



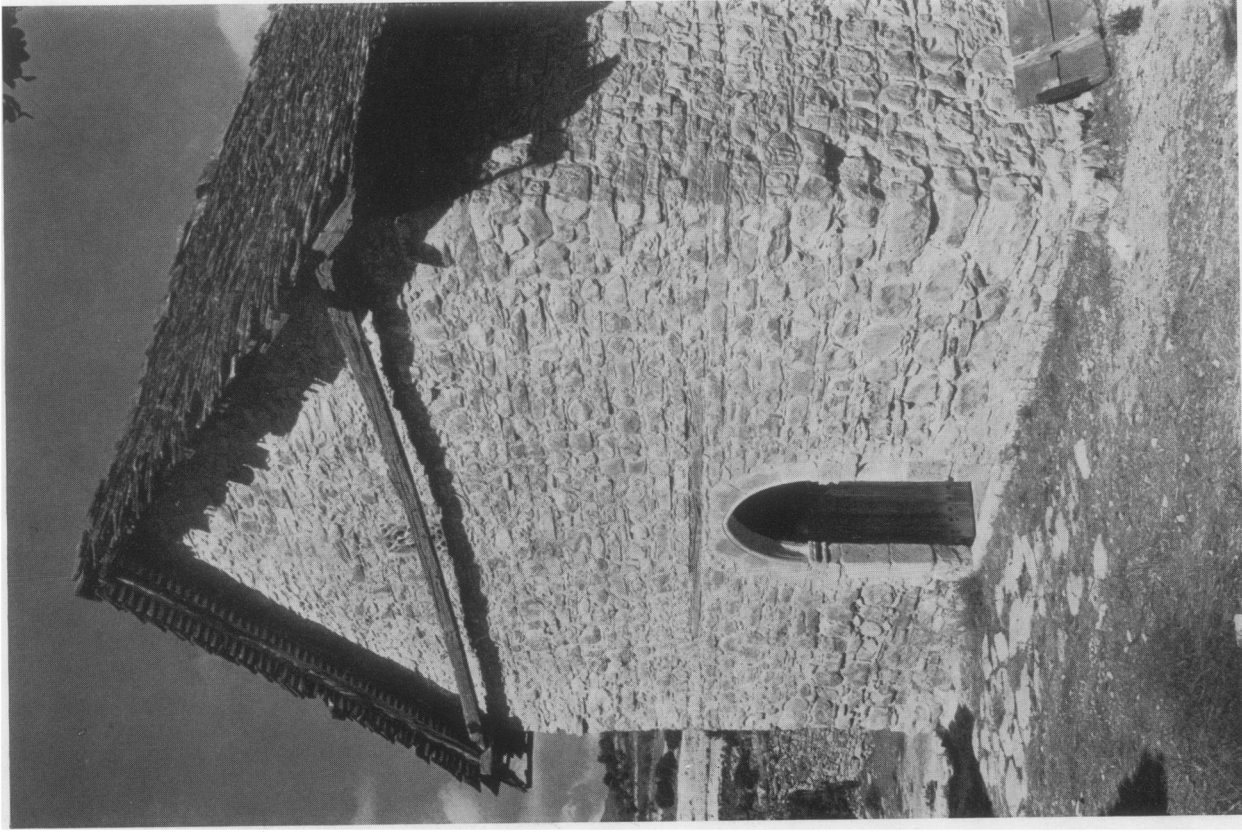
2. From the Three Mary's at the Tomb, Head of Angel



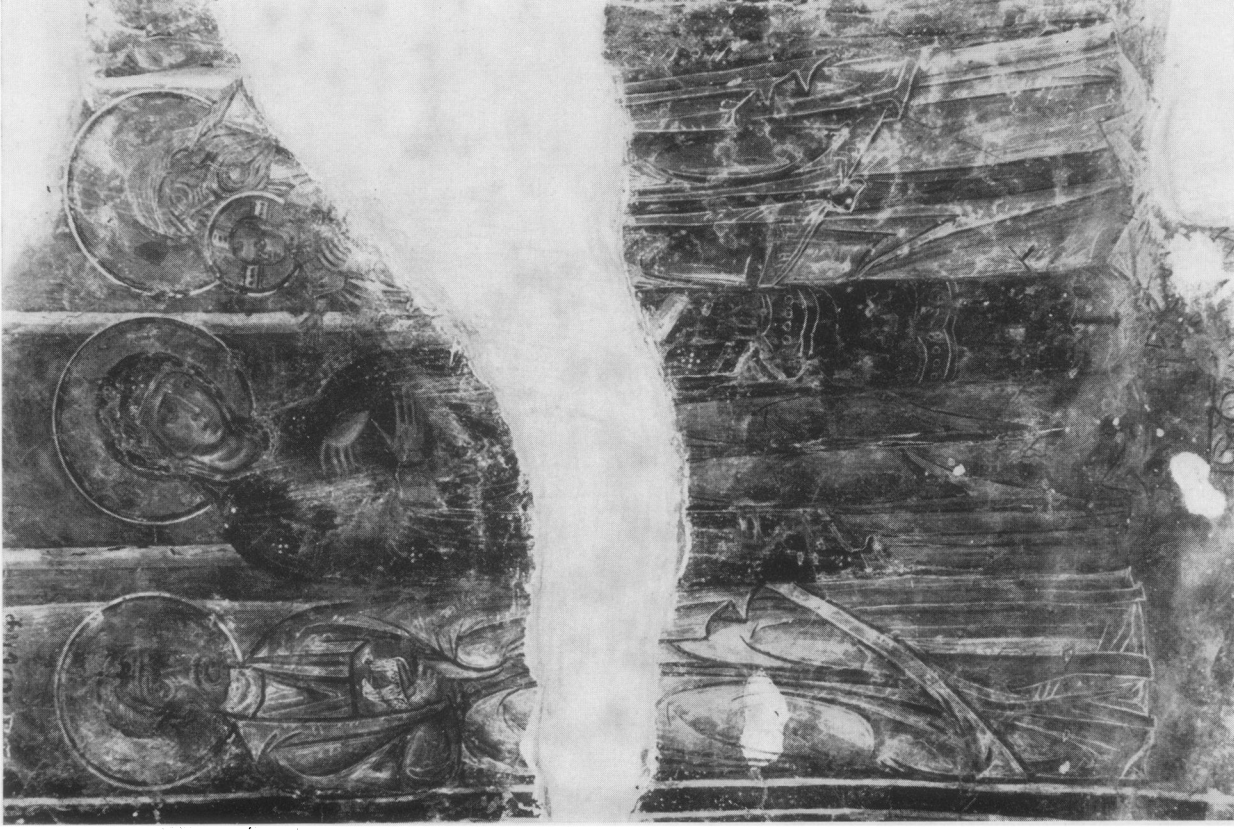
3. From the Anastasis, Head of Christ

Details of Figure 1

Monagri, Hagios Georgios, Vault, North Side, West End



4. West Façade



5. Vault, South Side. The Presentation of Christ; Second Period, before Treatment

Monagri, Panagia Amasgou



6. Sanctuary Vault, South Side.
Two Bishops; Fourth Period. Pentecost; Second Period



7. West Wall. The Koimesis, detail of Angels

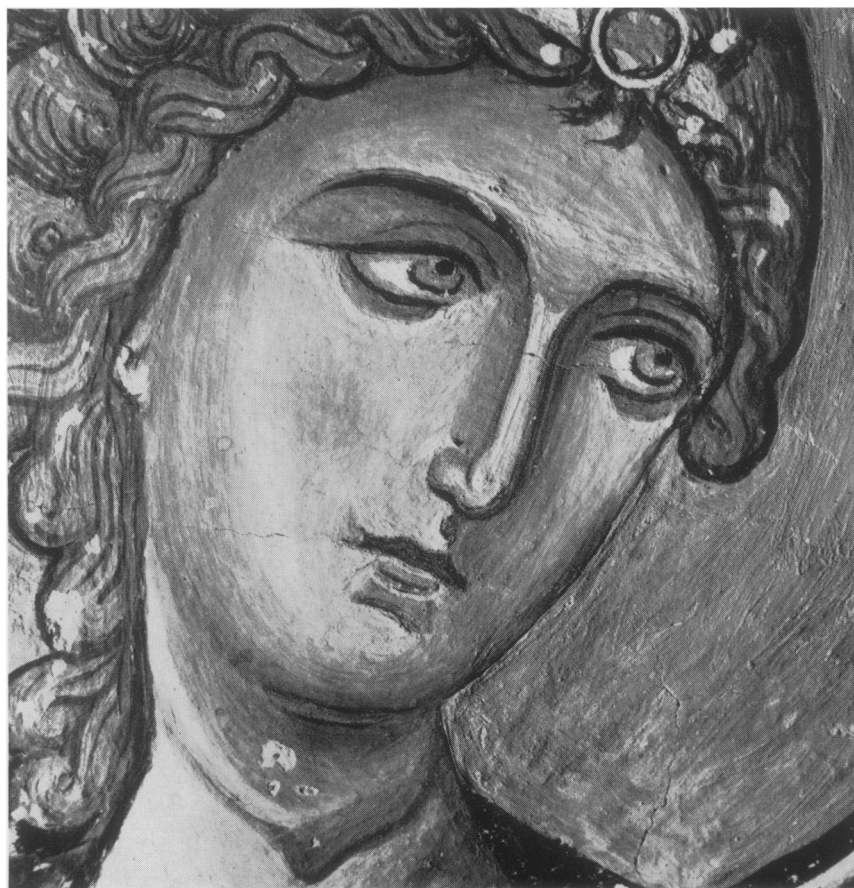
Monagri, Panagia Amasgou



8. Vault, South Side. The Nativity, detail, before Treatment



9. Apse, Conch. The Mother of God flanked by Archangels; Fourth Period, before Treatment
Monagri, Panagia Amasgou



10. Head of Angel



11. Work in Progress on Roundel of Angel
Lagoudera, Panagia tou Arakos, Dome

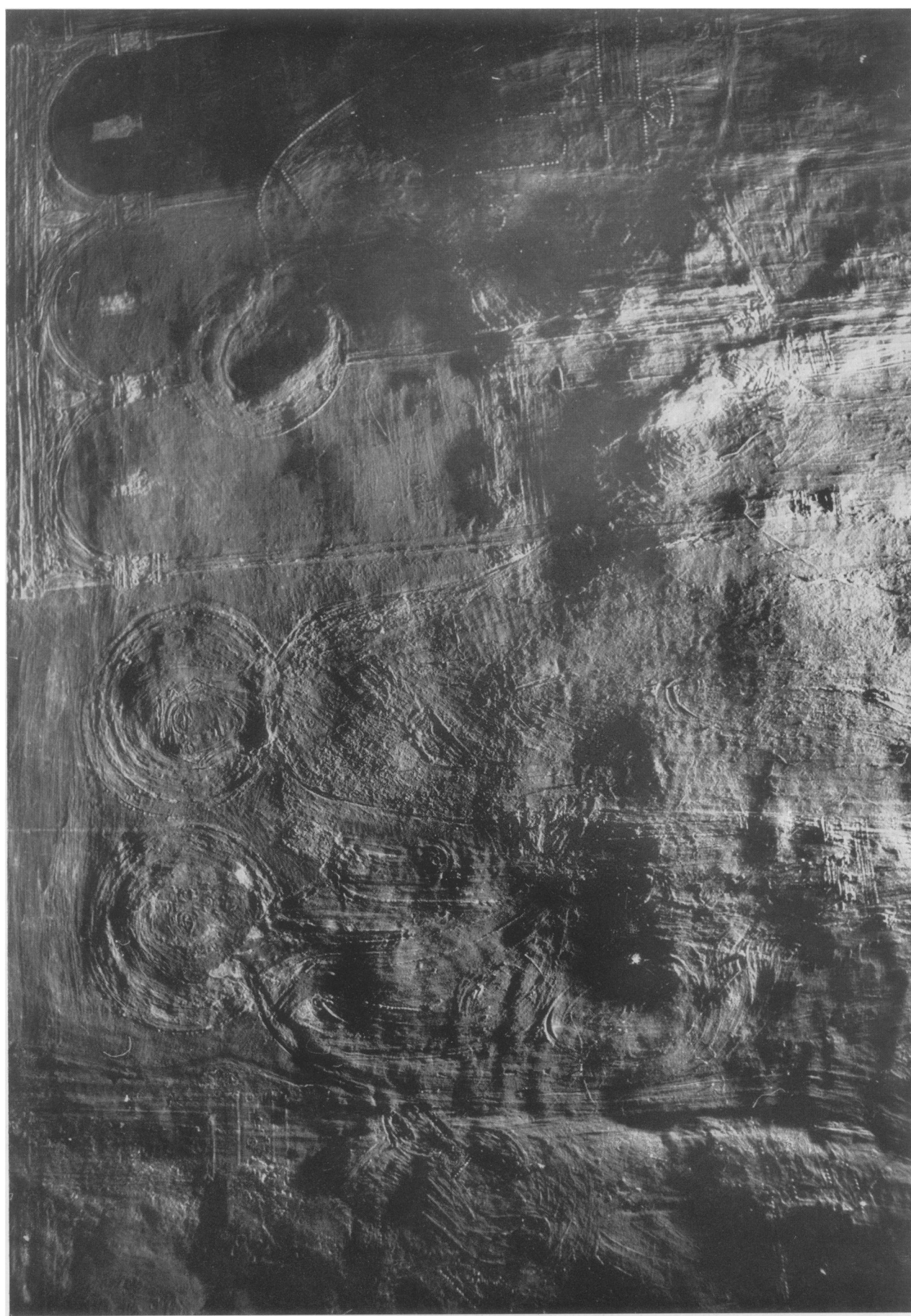


12. Northwest Pendentive. Evangelist Matthew.
Note repairs to neck, shoulder, and forearm.
Lower half of figure is also largely repainted.

Lagoudera, Panagia tou Arakos



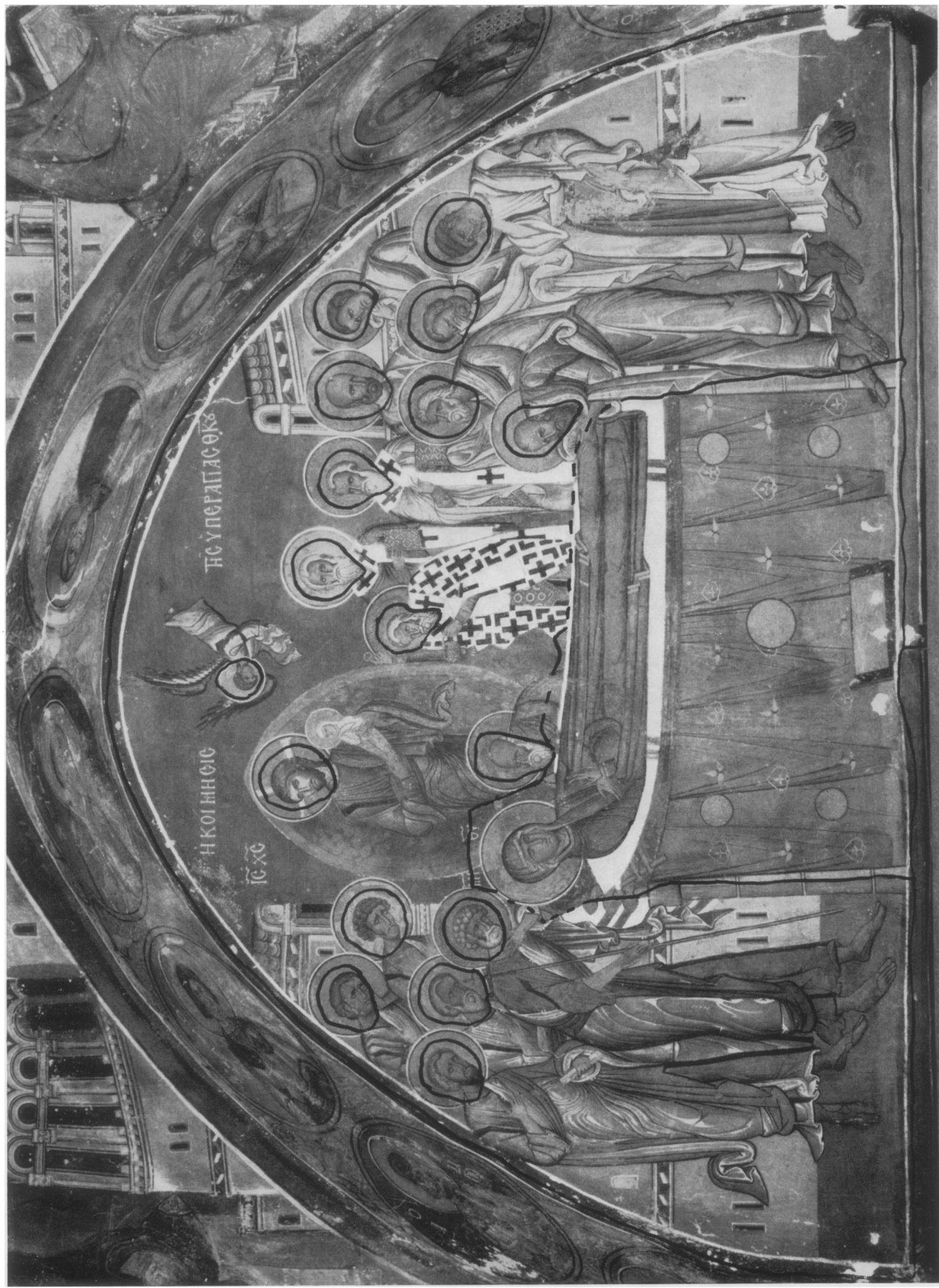
13. Southwest Pendentive. Head of Evangelist John the Theologian, by the
Repairer of the Paintings. Fourteenth Century? White dots are points
at which fixative has been injected.



14. Lagoudera, Panagia tou Arakos, Naos, North Blind Arch under Dome, Lunette. The Presentation of the Mother of God in the Temple. Detail of central area, before cleaning, under oblique lighting to illustrate problem of detecting plaster joins. Fresh patches for heads are fairly distinct; others less so.



15. Lagoudera, Panagia tou Arakos, Naos, South Blind Arch, Lunette. Detail, Head of St. Paul, before Cleaning. Photograph taken with raking light to show plaster patch for head.

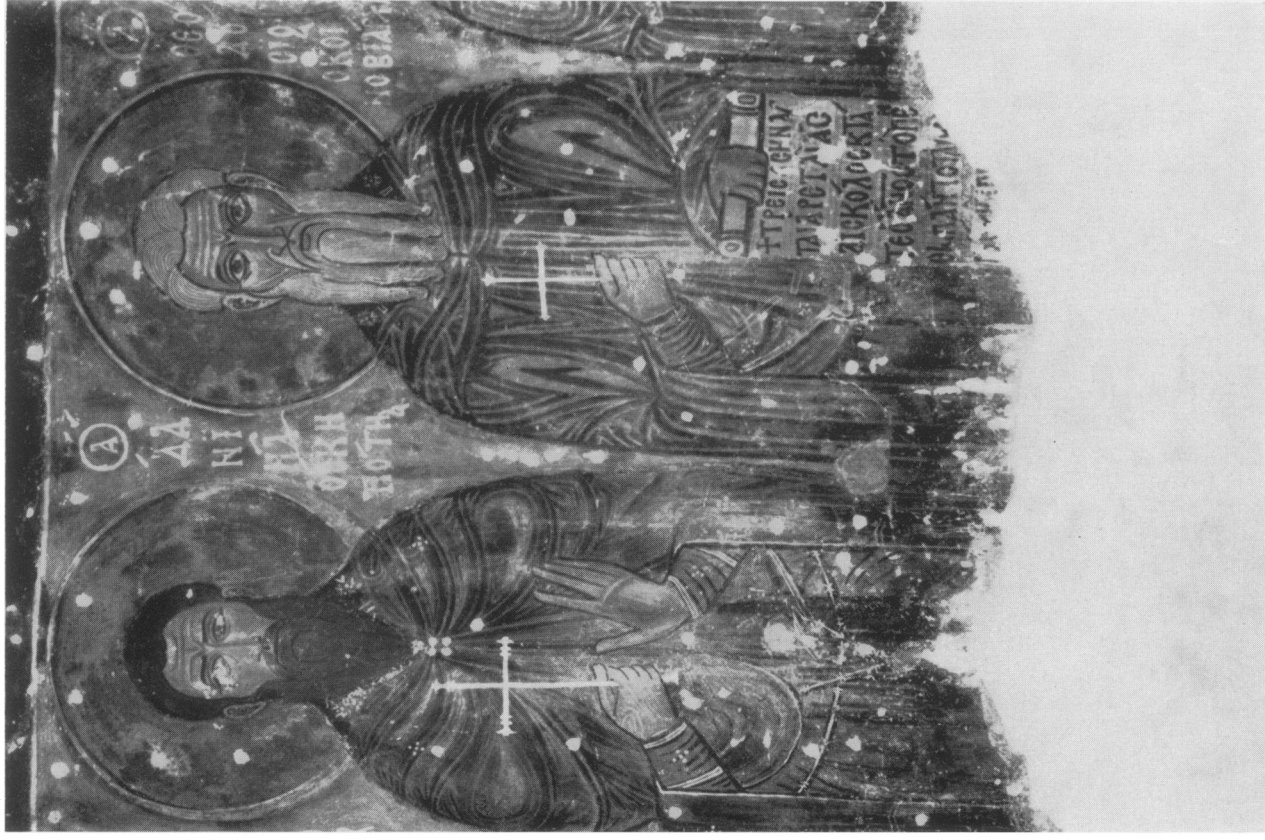


16. Lagoudera, Panagia tou Arakos, Naos, South Blind Arch, Lunette. The Koimesis, after Cleaning.
Black lines show approximate position of plaster joins.

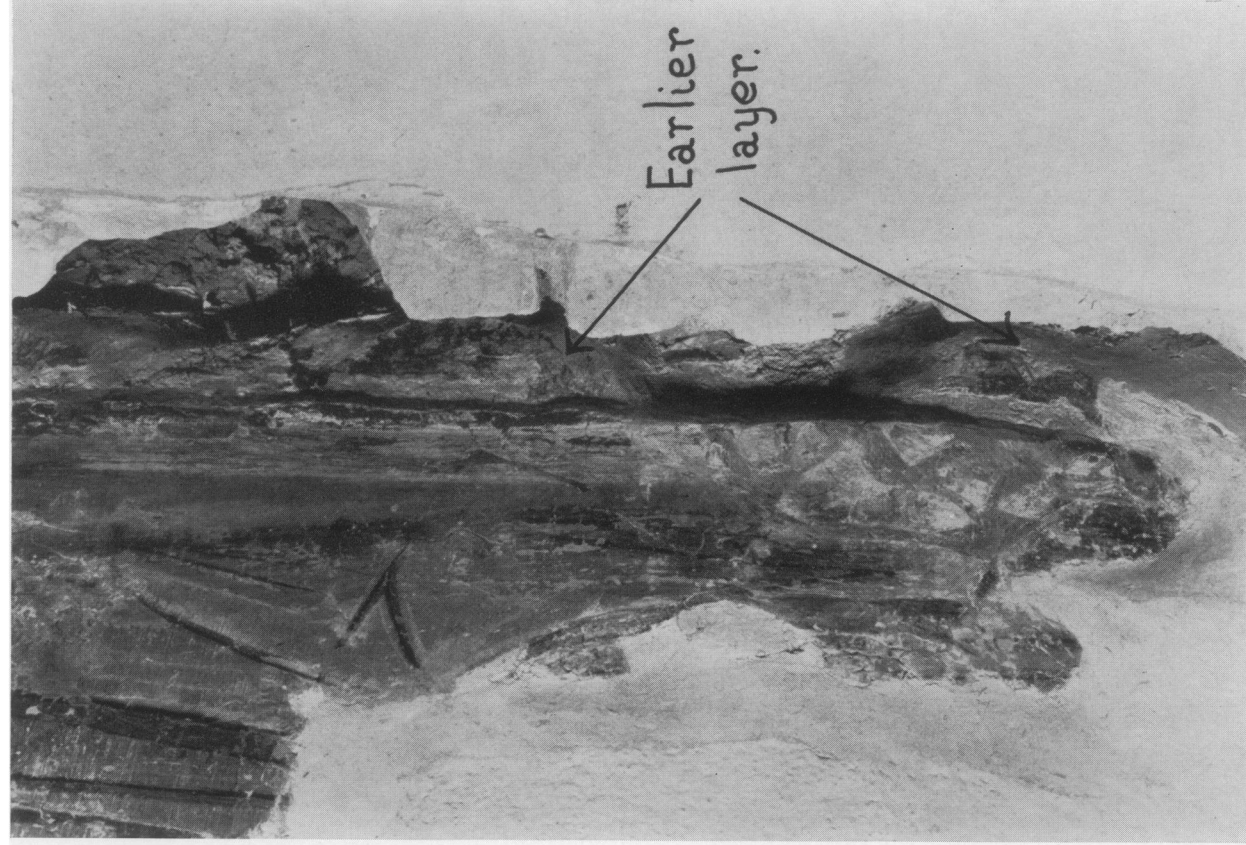


17. The Use of Presses to resecure Paintings to Wall of Cave

Paphos, Hagios Neophytos, Naos

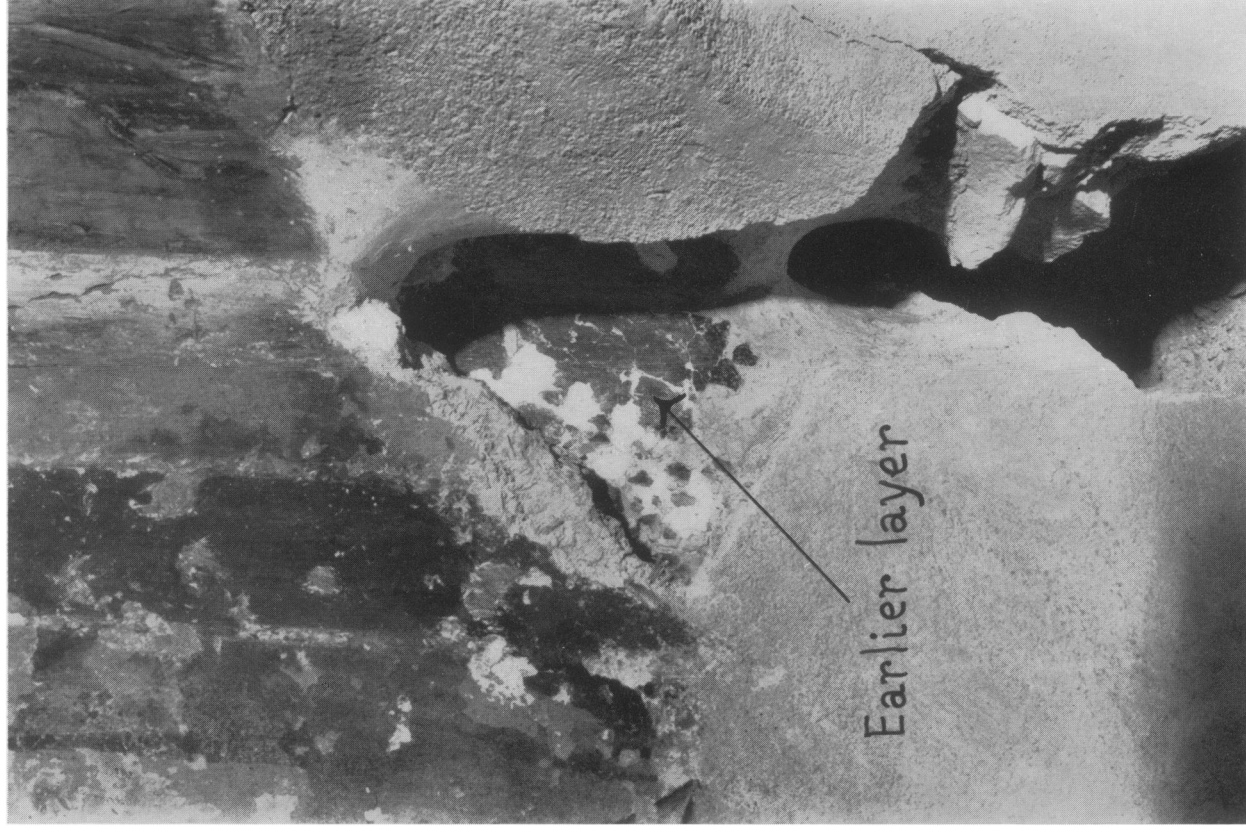


18. The Use of Holes for Injection of Adhesive to resecure Plaster
Ground to Wall



19. Cell, East Wall. South Figure, detail showing Early Layer of Painted Plaster, which extends behind Partition Wall.

Paphos, Hagios Neophytos



20. Bema, North Side, Partition Wall showing Earlier Layer of Painting

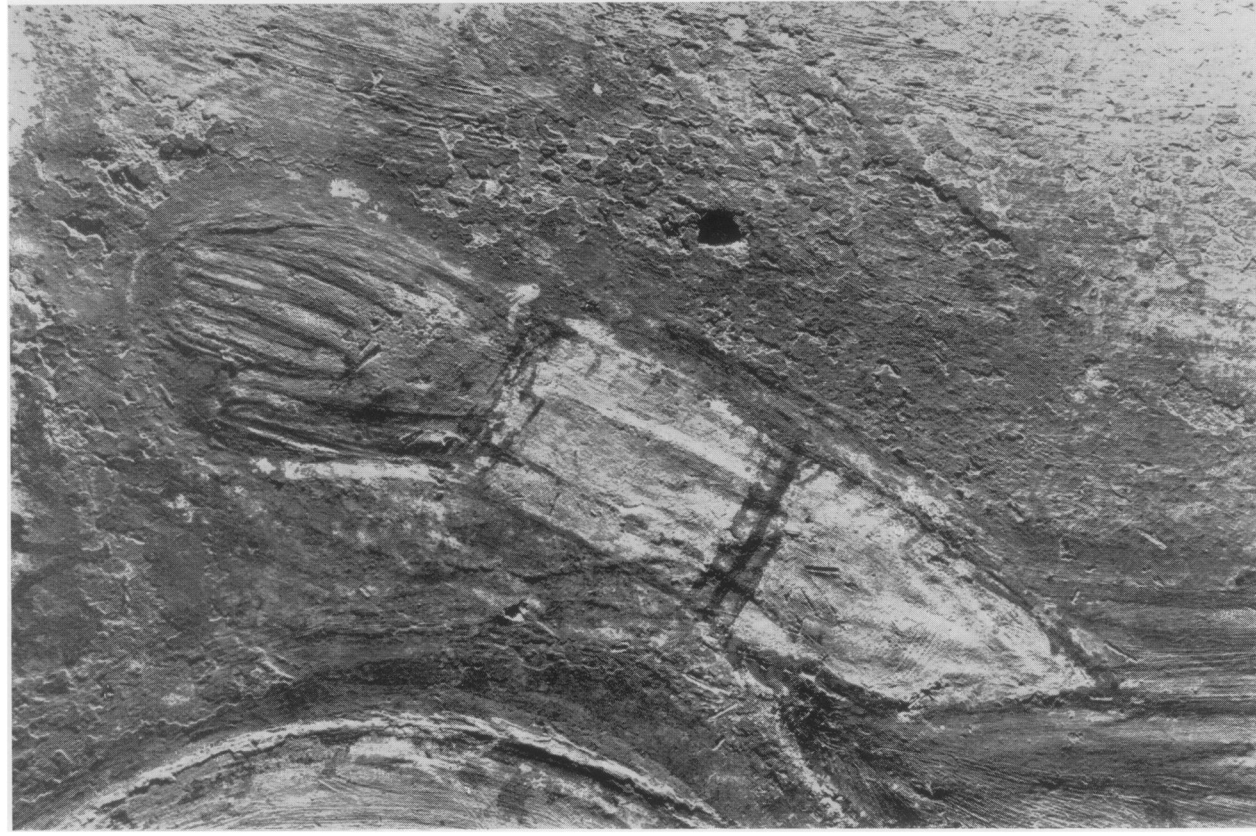


21. Head of the Mother of God, detail, to show Working of Plaster around Head

Paphos, Hagios Neophytos, Bema. Ascension



22. Head of an Apostle, detail, to show Plaster around Head. This plaster is either a fresh patch or has been reworked before Painting of Head.



23. Paphos, Hagios Neophytos, Bema. Ascension, the Mother of God, detail, to show Working of Plaster around Hand



24. Lagoudera, Panagia tou Arakos, Dome. The Prophet Habakkuk, detail, to show Working of Plaster around Hand